

Testimony of

Owner, Empire Fisheries Milford & Stonington CT

Before the

Energy and Technology Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

February 26, 2019

**RE: H.B. No. 7156 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROCUREMENT OF ENERGY DERIVED FROM
OFFSHORE WIND**

S.B. No. 875 AN ACT EXPANDING CONNECTICUT'S OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY PORTFOLIO.

Good afternoon, members of the Energy and Technology Committee. I am Joseph Gilbert, owner of Empire Fisheries of Milford, Connecticut. Empire Fisheries is one of Connecticut's largest commercial fishing companies. I am here today representing not only Empire but a coalition of other Connecticut fishermen – and women - and their commercial fishing counterparts.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today concerning an issue that affects all of Connecticut citizens, not just those of us who live and work in the waters off Connecticut's coastline - the planned development and eventual expansion of offshore wind energy turbines.

From the perspective of a Connecticut resident and one who lives and works closely with our natural resources each day – along with my fishing industry co-workers – we are in support of renewable energy. We will all benefit from a cleaner less carbon emitting energy source and an infinitely renewable energy source. We support these goals here in Connecticut and across the country.

I am here today to talk about another renewable resource – Connecticut's fisheries, its historic and economically contributing fishing industry - and the potential unintended negative effects that could arise unless greater attention is given to properly implement this new technology. Developing Connecticut's offshore wind energy resources cannot be accomplished in a vacuum. Simply put, we cannot displace one renewable resource – our state's fishing industry - with another renewable resource.

If the wind source industry wants to have a stake in generating electricity in our state's waters it must come with added responsibility to protect the existing fishing industry. And, ladies and gentlemen, that's where you come in.

Potential problems abound. The experiences of other nations, indeed, other states, which are much further along than Connecticut is with this technology, include lessons we must learn from to ensure that Connecticut does it right.

All we are asking is that the State of Connecticut ensure that the proper protections are in place – environmental, industrial, commercial and the safety of our fisherman. With respect to offshore wind energy and the state's vital commercial fishing industry I am asking that the two work in tandem to protect each other's interests.

Connecticut's fishing industry, among the oldest in the nation, is a vibrant economic contributor to the state and a major employer. Failure to protect economically and environmentally stable fishing grounds, prime fishing waters and the sea life that we depend upon puts our industry – and the health of Connecticut's sea food consumers at great risk.

A sampling of the potential problems that could arise if protections are not put in place include:

- Underwater seismic or jet blasting conducted for installing wind turbine bases disrupts the sea floor and nearby shellfish beds, kills fish and can harm sea life through, for example, loss of equilibrium in sea creatures leading to their displacement and abandonment of once thriving fishing areas.
- Scouring: scouring occurs when the ocean floor is disturbed and sediment rises, suspended as in a cloud, sometimes traveling over miles, settling in undesired areas. This is particularly harmful to the scallop population.
- Oil leakage and corrosive effects of aging turbines. Turbines in other offshore wind farms have been known to leak oils and other corrosives into the seabed and food stream of sea life. This can end up on consumers' dinner plates along with their seafood. Proper safeguards must be in place to ensure the necessary operation, regular maintenance and, when the time comes, retirement, of this equipment.
- Spinning blades on 1,100 foot wind turbines disrupt shore base radar and vessel based radars, creating water safety rescue issues and safe navigation issues. These must be addressed.
- Hangs: A hang occurs when a fishing vessel's equipment snags on debris or an obstruction on the bottom. The placement of wind turbines will create additional obstructions on the sea floor. The danger of snagging on an obstruction in a wind field is the vessel losing maneuverability and the potential for an collision with a tower a serious risk.
- Safety: Fishing vessels are at sea in all kinds of weather day and night. Transiting or fishing in a wind field in heavy weather creates extreme risk for fishermen. Where once in open ocean, now multiple navigation hazards will exist if a fishing vessel must lay to or lose his power he will have just a matter of seconds before contending with these obstacles and life threatening situations.

- Indemnification: If there is an allision and there is a loss of a tower, a vessel or worse a life, who indemnifies who?
- Wind farms can eliminate the micro climate: Eliminating the micro climate could cause icing-over of at-sea fishing vessels which normally for safety reasons stay out at sea in the protection of warmer ocean air during especially cold periods.
- Underwater, low frequency vibrations from the spinning blades affect fish and squid populations. This affects migration routes of sea life populations.
- Once in place, nighttime aviation lighting atop the turbines attracts migratory birds. This leads to a major increase in bird strikes, often in great numbers, by spinning turbine blades.
- Endangered Species: Endangered migrating species such as the North Atlantic right whale are also effected by the low frequency sounds.
- While Connecticut's interest at the moment is for a small number of turbines, fishermen must contend with the broader picture of thousands of these towers placed in the ocean by multiple vendors.
- Decommissioning of a tower must include complete removal of not only the turbine and corresponding tower but also the base and it's foundation so as to not cause additional obstructions on the sea floor for future generations of fishermen.
- Loss of access: Based on spacing, orientation and alignment, vast areas of seafloor will become inaccessible to fishermen.

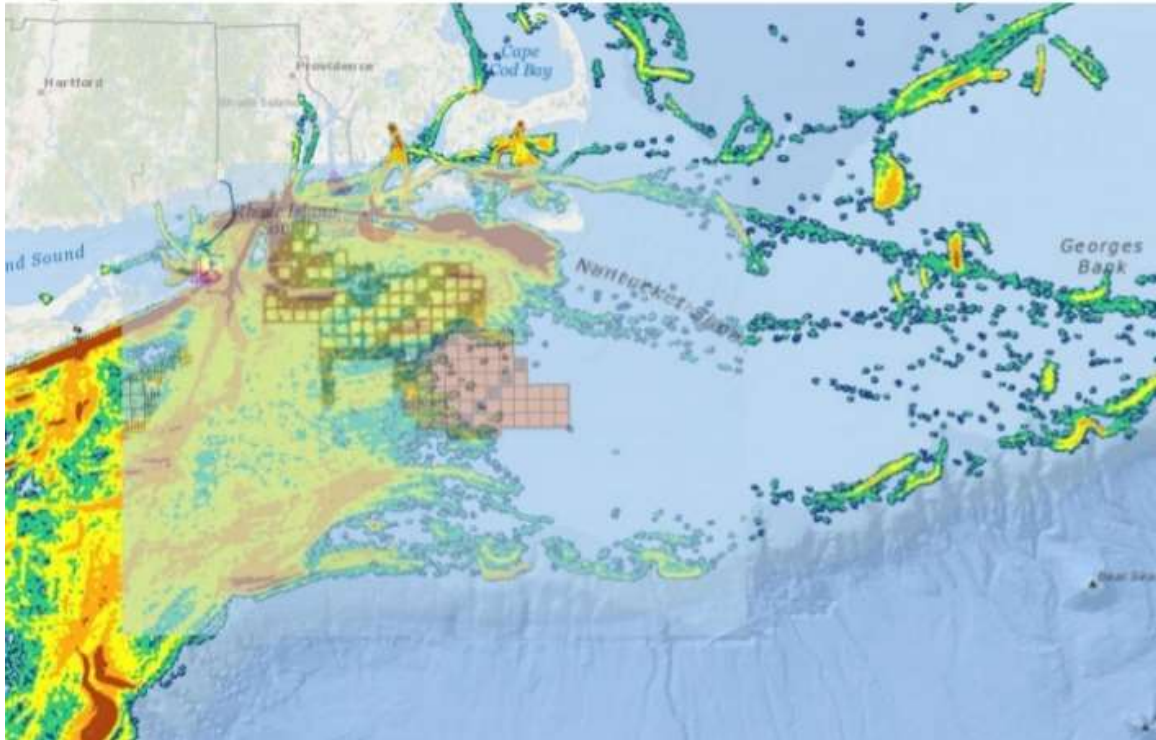
Connecticut's fishermen request the following amongst their other asks:

- Safe and unobstructed access to our resources
- A hold harmless for allision and entanglements
- Compensation for loss of access, loss of gear and loss of time
- Proper transit lanes with minimal to no risk for a safe return home to our families
- Consistency review to Connecticut's **Coastal Management Act** or any other applicable policy or law with purview of Connecticut's coastal waters.
- An opportunity to review any and all **Draft Environmental Impact Statements (DEIS)** for data consistency.

On behalf of Connecticut's fishing industry, thank you for your attention to these arising conflicts. We hope you will take our thoughts and suggestions in the constructive manner they are intended and that you take appropriate action to help protect our state's proud and historic fishing industry as a condition to bringing clean, offshore wind power to Connecticut's residents. In other, words, don't have one renewable resource displace another renewable resource.

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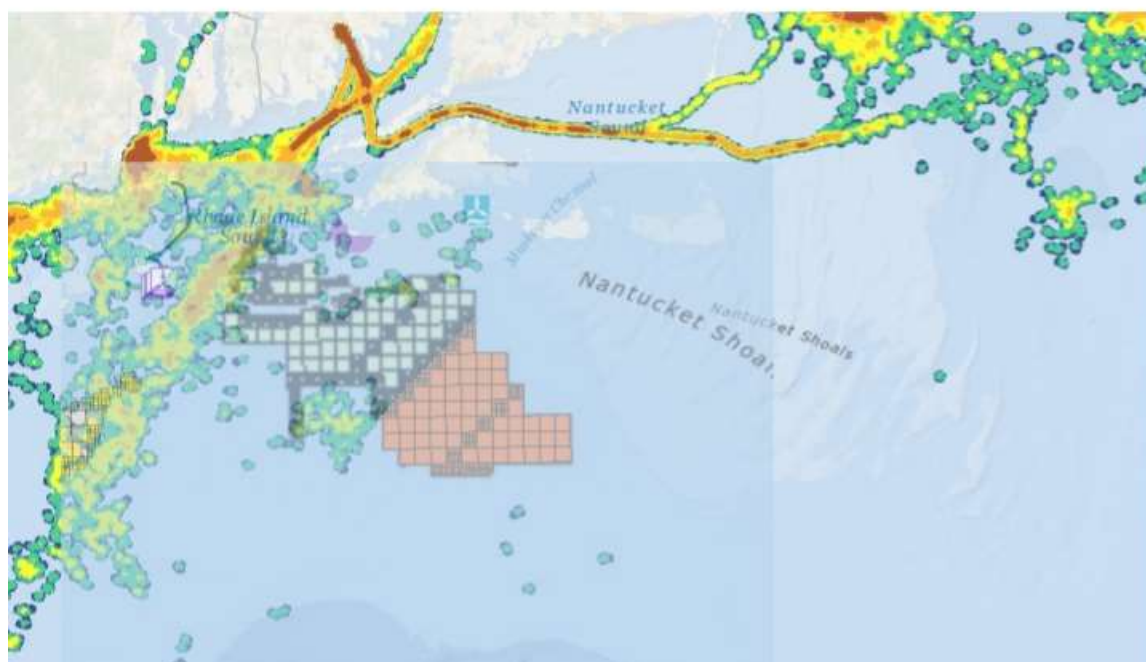
Squid Transit 2015-2016



Scallop Transit 2011-2014



Herring Transit 2015-2016



Scouring

